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ABSTRACT

The out-of-school child find program conducted by the Albuquerque (New Mexico) Public Schools to locate and refer handicapped children from birth to the mandated age for public education was evaluated. This program used funds from Public Law 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act. An awareness campaign, screening and evaluation of children, and serving as a liaison between the schools and outside agencies serving handicapped children were the program's objectives. Data were collected by interviews with special education administrators and diagnosticians and review of records of the Child Find Office and the District Diagnostic Center. Focus was on evaluating the program's impact and effectiveness. Parents referred 165 children in the first year. The children ranged in age from 1 year to school age; 57.64% were 3 or 4 years old. Parents found out about the program from: (1) program staff; (2) awareness campaign literature; (3) friends or relations; (4) school newsletter; (5) referral by physicians and psychologists; (6) program reports; and (7) school or day care center. Parents referred children for the following major reasons: (1) language and speech problems; (2) hearing problems; (3) behavior problems; and (4) unspecified concerns. About 16% of the children referred qualified for special education programs; parents of those who did not qualify received suggestions and activities for working with their children. (SLD)

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EVALUATION REPORT

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P.L. 94-142
Out Of School
Child Find Program

ALBUQUERQUE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

TM011 867

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EVALUATION REPORT

P.L. 94-142
OUT-OF-SCHOOL CHILD FIND

ADMINISTRATIVE SUMMARY

Program Description

Albuquerque Public Schools (APS) elected to use some of its Public Law 94-142, Education For All Handicapped Children Act-Part B (P.L. 94-142) funds to conduct an out-of-school child find program as mandated in P.L. 94-142 (Regulation 121a.220). The objective of the APS program was:

> To locate, identify and refer children who may be handicapped, age 0 to the mandated age range for public education. (Application to New Mexico State Department of Education for P.L. 94-142-Part B funds, 1986 Plan, p. 26.)

APS assigned the Child Find/Early Childhood Coordinator the task of coordinating the APS Child Find activities. This coordination involved several major components including:

1. Conducting an awareness campaign to help locate and identify children who were not attending school and who might be handicapped.
2. Conducting screening of identified children.
3. Arranging for further evaluation of children if necessary.
4. Serving as a liaison between APS and outside agencies who serve handicapped children.

Methodology

The study was designed to evaluate the impact and effectiveness of the program. Data were collected by two methods: interviews and review of records.

Major Findings

The major findings of the study were:

(1) The priorities of the Child Find Program included:
   (a) Conducting an awareness campaign to inform the general public that handicapped children have a right to special education and should be brought to the attention of the schools.
   (b) Obtaining referral/intake information from parents of children needing or wanting screening.
   (c) Coordinating the screening efforts for children.
   (d) Serving as a liaison between APS and outside agencies who serve handicapped children.
   (e) Maintaining records on intake data, screening results, and tracking the outcome of testing.
   (f) Assuring that screening procedures were within the parameters established in the Educational Standards for New Mexico Schools (July, 1986).

(2) The P.L. 94-142 project focused on identifying children from the ages of birth to mandatory school age.

(3) Parents referred 165 children to the Coordinator of Child Find during the first year of P.L. 94-142 funding.

(4) Parents reported finding out about the Child Find Project from the following sources:

   -24% were informed by APS staff
   -21% saw awareness campaign literature
   -11% heard about the program from friends or relatives
   - 9% saw information in APS school newsletters
   - 8% were told about the program by physicians or psychologists
   - 8% obtained information from APS in Action
   - 7% heard about the program from the preschool/day care center that their child attended

(5) Parents referred children to the Child Find Project predominantly for four reasons:

   -speech and language problems
   -behavior problems
   -concern for the child (unspecified)
   -hearing problems

(6) Twenty-six (26) or 15.75% of those referred to the Child Find Project qualified for special education services.

EVALUATION REPORT

P.L. 94-142
OUT-OF-SCHOOL CHILD FIND

Background And
Program Description

Albuquerque Public Schools (APS) elected to use some of its Public Law 94-142, Education For All Handicapped Children Act-Part B (P.L. 94-142) funds to conduct an out-of-school child find program as mandated in P.L. 94-142 (Regulation 121a.220). The objective of the APS program was:

> To locate, identify and refer children who may be handicapped, age 0 to the mandated age range for public education. (Application to New Mexico State Department of Education for P.L. 94-142-Part B funds, 1986 Plan, p. 26.)

The New Mexico State Department of Education mandated that every school district must conduct an "out-of-school child identification" program "to identify, locate, and evaluate all children within their jurisdiction suspected of being exceptional" (Educational Standards for New Mexico Schools, July, 1985, p. B 1). The Standards further specified that each district must conduct out-of-school child find activities annually. Specifically, districts must:

> -Establish child-find activities to locate and identify children who are not attending school and who may be exceptional.
> -Notify the public of the availability of special education services in the local education agency. (p. B 1)

In addition to other duties, the Child Find/Early Childhood Coordinator of the District was assigned the task of coordinating APS Child Find activities. This coordination involved several major components, including a media campaign to inform the general public that out-of-school handicapped children have a right to receive special education services and that they should be brought to the attention of the schools. The Coordinator also contacted physicians, clinics, preschools, day care centers, and hospitals to inform them of the availability of special education programs; scheduled screening of referred children; and helped to arrange further evaluations if necessary.

EVALUATION DESIGN

Development Of The Study

In January of 1986, Central Office Special Education Department administrators met with representatives from the Planning, Research and Accountability Department (PRA) to prioritize the 35 P.L. 94-142 components for study. The Out-Of-School Child Find component was considered to be a priority for evaluation by the Special Education Department. Hence, it was selected as one of the components to be studied in 1986.

The evaluator from PRA was assigned to study the impact and effectiveness of the program. The evaluator interviewed key special education administrators to ascertain: a) the goals of the program, b) the activities of the project, c) the administrators' perceptions of the project, and d) questions that the administrators wanted to have answered.

Research questions to be addressed and methods for data collection were determined. Questions to be addressed were:

1. What were the activities of the Out-Of-School Child Find component?
2. What was the referral and screening process?
3. What was the impact of the activities of the Child Find Program?

Data collection was accomplished through interviews and review of records. Each of these methods is briefly described.

Interviews. Group and individual interviews of special education administrators and diagnosticians were conducted to obtain background information about the project. Interviewees were asked if they had questions they would like to be addressed in the study. The questions were incorporated into the study.

Review Of Records. Records in the Child Find Office as well as records at the District Diagnostic Center (DDC) were reviewed. The purposes of the review were to examine the activities of the program and to ascertain the results of the program.

Rather than discuss the results of each data source in isolation, all the information has been integrated according to topics throughout the discussion. The end result is a comprehensive picture of the effectiveness and impact of the program.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Summary Of Activities Of The Child Find Coordinator

The APS Child Find/Early Childhood Coordinator was responsible for: (1) distributing awareness information to the general public, public agencies, and private groups; (2) obtaining "intake" information on children being referred to the project; (3) coordinating screening activities which were held once a month at three locations and at a fourth location as needed; (4) maintaining records on children referred; and (5) serving as a liaison between APS and other agencies in the city who serve handicapped children. A description of some of the activities follows.

Awareness Campaign. The Coordinator conducted an ongoing awareness campaign to inform the general public that handicapped children have a right to special education and that these children should be brought to the attention of the schools. While the awareness campaign was focused on identifying pre-school aged children in need of services, it also had the potential to help identify children and youth through age 21 who were not receiving special education services. Information was distributed through school newsletters, local television stations, newspapers, and posters (e.g., posters in clinics, hospitals, and day care centers). According to information provided by the Coordinator, APS also distributed approximately 130,000 copies of APS In Action to the Sunday edition of the Albuquerque Journal in October, 1985, as part of the awareness campaign.

The Coordinator distributed information (e.g., letters and brochures) on Child Find services to clinics, day care centers, the United Council of Churches, pediatricians, family practice physicians, the Lovelace Hospital Parent Program, hospitals, and public service agencies.

Referral/Intake. State Standards have been established for the referral and intake process (Memo, State Department of Education, March, 1985). Referral/intake has been defined as the "process by which the educational agency gathers information from the child's parents or legal guardian prior to screening or evaluation" (Memo, Ibid., December, 1985, p. 2). The Coordinator handled all referral/intake calls, scheduled screening, and assured that all pertinent State Regulations were followed.

Screening. State Standards have also been established for "developmental screening" (Memo, Ibid., December, 1985, p. 2-3). Screening is "the process by which the educational agency determines whether or not a child needs to be referred for further evaluation" (Memo, Ibid., December, 1985, p. 2). The Standards specified the use of certain instruments and mandated that screening must be conducted by trained personnel. Further, parents must be informed about the purpose of the screening, must give their written permission, and must have the findings explained to them.

The Coordinator monitored the screening process. Screening was conducted by trained personnel at each area office once a month throughout the year. Screenings were conducted at the DDC as needed (e.g., if a child was under 3 or if the child appeared to need a specialized evaluation).

The screening in APS consisted of: obtaining background information; screening children for vision and hearing problems; administering one test to assess the child's developmental levels; and conducting a speech and language test when appropriate.

Record Maintenance. The Coordinator maintained records on intake data and screening results, and tracked the outcome of testing if the child was evaluated. The record keeping tasks are required by State Standards as well as for P.L. 94-142 documentation.

Liaison. The Coordinator served as a liaison between APS and outside agencies who serve handicapped children. Special preschools and agencies currently serving handicapped children were also contacted to make personnel aware of the services available. Information was shared so that the APS Special Education Department would know the number of children who are likely to need special education services in the following year.

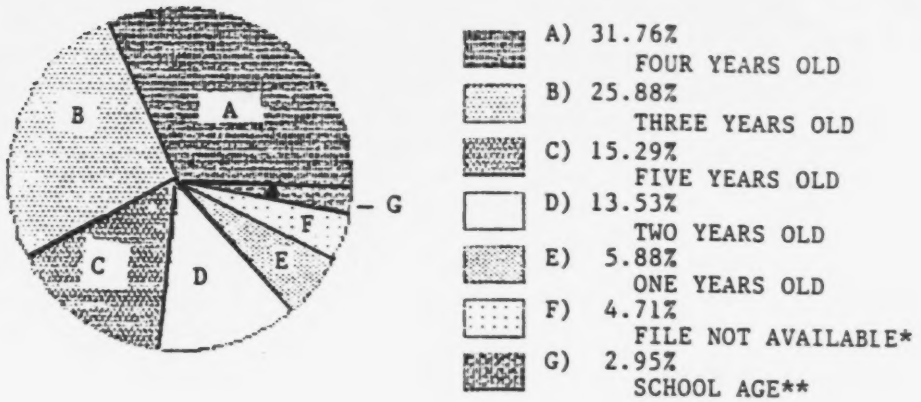
Profile Of Children Referred

The Child Find Office received 165 referrals during the 1985-86 school year. Thirty (30) children were referred directly to the District Diagnostic Center since they: 1) had received previous screening outside the District; or 2) were receiving some services (e.g., speech and language therapy) which indicated a possible need for special education services (e.g., hearing impaired, physical impairment, medically fragile, and visually impaired). Of the remaining 135 children, parents of eight (8) children declined screening or moved.

Ages Of Children Referred. Records kept by personnel in the Child Find office indicated the date of birth of each child referred and the chronological age of each child when he/she was screened. Ages of children referred are summarized in Figure 1 (see page 5).

FIGURE 1

AGES OF CHILDREN REFERRED
TO THE CHILD FIND OFFICE



* The child's file was not in the Child Find Office during the review of records.

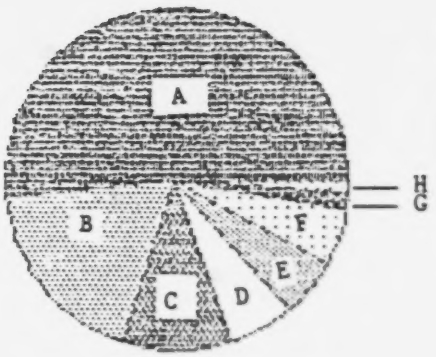
** Children were already enrolled in an APS school. These children were referred to school personnel.

The majority of children (57.64%) were three and four years old. Another 28.82% of the children referred were five years old and two years old. Close to 6% of the children were one year old. Close to 3% of the children referred were of school age. Parents of these children were given explanations regarding the referral process and testing procedures and were then referred back to their child's school.

Reasons For Referral. Figure 2 (see page 6) summarizes the reasons parents referred their children to the Child Find Office. The majority of the children (51.63%) were referred because of suspected speech and language problems. Hearing problems were the second most frequent reason for referral, with 18.48% of the children being referred for having possible hearing problems. Ten point thirty-three percent (10.33%) of the children were referred for possible behavior problems. Another 6.98% of the children were referred by parents who were concerned whether the development level of their child was within "normal ranges." The four remaining categories represented possible vision, motor, attention span, or medical problems.

FIGURE 2

REASON FOR REFERRAL
TO THE CHILD FIND OFFICE



A) 51.63%
SPEECH & LANGUAGE

B) 18.48%
HEARING

C) 10.33%
BEHAVIOR

D) 5.98%
CONCERNED PARENTS

E) 5.43%
VISION

F) 5.43%
MOTOR

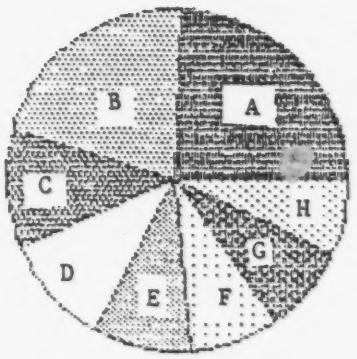
G) 1.63%
ATTENTION SPAN

H) 1.09%
MEDICAL

Source Of Information. Beginning in the summer of 1985, the Coordinator asked parents how they heard about the project. Figure 3 summarizes the source of information.

FIGURE 3

SOURCE OF INFORMATION
REGARDING THE PROGRAM



A) 24.12%
APS STAFF

B) 21.18%
AWARENESS LITERATURE

C) 11.18%
NOT RECORDED

D) 10.59%
FRIEND/RELATIVE

E) 9.41%
APS SCHOOL NEWSLETTERS

F) 8.24%
PHYSICIAN/PSYCHOLOGIST

G) 8.24%
APS IN ACTION

H) 7.04%
PRESCHOOL/DAYCARE

In the awareness campaign, the Coordinator of the project provided awareness literature (e.g., posters and brochures), information to be included in APS School Newsletters, and an article for APS in Action. Together, these represented 38.83% of the sources of information about the project. APS staff members (principals, teachers, and special education administrators) provided information about the project to 25.12% of those calling

about Child Find. Physicians, psychologists, preschools, and day care centers were the information source for 15.28% of the referrals. The awareness campaign coupled with the liaison activities of the Coordinator accounted for 78.23% of the sources of information about the project.

What Were The Results
Of The Screenings?

The Child Find Project received 165 calls. Thirty (30) students who had already been screened medically or who were receiving services privately were referred directly for evaluation. Six (6) students fell below expected norms and were referred for evaluation. The parents of eight (8) children declined screening or did not show up at their scheduled time.

Of the 36 children referred to the District Diagnostic Center (DDC) for a complete evaluation, 26 (or 15.75%) qualified for special education services. State Standards require that children be eligible for special education according to definitions of handicapping conditions as specified in State Standards. The breakdown of handicapping conditions of those tested were as follows:

# Of Children	Eligibility Categories For Children
10	Communication Disordered
4	Hearing Impaired
3	Developmentally Disabled[1]
3	Behavior Disordered
2	Multiply Impaired
2	Physically Impaired
1	Educable Mentally Handicapped
1	Severe/Profoundly Handicapped
1	Visually Impaired

Each child was placed in an appropriate program according to his/her special needs.

Parents of those children who were at or above the expected norms or did not qualify for special education services were offered suggestions and activities for working with their child.

Forty-eight (48) children enrolled in the various special preschools were not screened. Since these children already had intensive evaluations and were receiving services, they were re-evaluated at the DDC and placed in APS special education programs as appropriate. Parents of children in these programs were told that they did not need to have their children screened.

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(1) The New Mexico Educational Standards for New Mexico Schools (July, 1986) reserves this category solely for three and four year olds.

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